VENICE Preſerved;

OR,

A PLOT Diſcovered.

A

TRAGEDY.

Written by Mr. THOMAS OTWAY.

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Dramatis Perſonæ.

Duke of Venice,		Mr. BRANSBY.
Priuli, *Father to* Belvidera, *a Senator*,		Mr. HAVARD.
Bedamar, *the* Spaniſh *Ambaſſador*,		Mr. PACKER.
JAFFIER,	CONSPIRATORS.	Mr. POWELL.
PIERRE,		Mr. HOLLAND.
Renault,		Mr. BURTON.
Spinoſa,		Mr. STEVENS.
Theodore,		
Eliot,		
Revellido,		
Durand,		
Mezzano,		
Bramveil,		
Ternon,		
Brabe,		

BELVIDERA, Mrs. YATES.

Two Women, Attendants on Belvidera.

The Council of Ten.

Officer, Guard, Friar, Executioner, and Rabble.

VENICE Preſerved;

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ACT I. SCENE I.

A Street in Venice.

Enter Priuli *and* Jaffier.

Pri. NO more! I'll hear no more; be gone and leave me.

Jaff. Not hear me! by my ſuffering, but you ſhall!
My lord, my lord! I'm not that abject wretch
You think me: Patience! where's the diſtance throws
Me back ſo far, but I may boldly ſpeak
In right, tho' proud oppreſſion will not hear me?

Pri. Have you not wrong'd me?

Jaff. Wrong'd you!

Pri. Yes, wrong'd me; in the niceſt point,
The honour of my houſe, you've done me wrong.
You may remember (for I now will ſpeak,
And urge its baſeneſs) when you firſt came home
From travel, with ſuch hopes as made you look'd on
By all men's eyes, a youth of expectation;
Pleas'd with your growing virtue, I receiv'd you;
Courted, and ſought to raiſe you to your merits:
My houſe, my table, nay, my fortune too,
My very ſelf was yours, you might have us'd me
To your beſt ſervice; like an open friend
I treated, truſted you, and thought you mine:
When, in requital of my beſt endeavours,
You treacherouſly practis'd to undo me,
Seduc'd the weakneſs of my age's darling,
My only child, and ſtole her from my boſom:
Oh! *Belvidera!*

Jaff. 'Tis to me you owe her.
Childleſs you had been elſe, and in the grave
Your name extinct; no more *Priuli* heard of
You may remember, ſcarce five years are paſt,
Since in your brigantine you ſail'd to ſee
The *Adriatick* wedded by our duke;
And I was with you: Your unſkilful pilot
Daſh'd us upon a rock; when to your boat
You made for ſafety: Enter'd firſt yourſelf;
Th' affrighted *Belvidera*, following next,
As ſhe ſtood trembling on the veſſel's ſide,
Was by a wave waſh'd off into the deep;
When inſtantly I plung'd into the ſea,
And, buffeting the billows to her reſcue,
Redeem'd her life with half the loſs of mine.
Like a rich conqueſt, in one hand I bore her,
And with the other daſh'd the ſaucy waves,
That throng'd and preſs'd to rob me of my prize:
I brought her, gave her to your deſpairing arms:
Indeed you thank'd me; but a nobler gratitude
'Roſe in her ſoul: For from that hour ſhe lov'd me,
'Till for her life ſhe paid me with herſelf.

Pri. You ſtole her from me; like a thief you ſtole her,

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At

At dead of night; that curſed hour you choſe
To riſle me of all my heart held dear.
May all your joys in her prove falſe like mine;
A ſterile fortune, and a barren bed,
Attend you both; continual diſcord make
Your days and nights bitter and grievous, ſtill
May the hard hand of a vexatious need
Oppreſs and grind you; till at laſt you find
The curſe of diſobedience all your portion.

Jaff. Half of your curſe you have beſtow'd in vain;
Heav'n has already crown'd our faithful loves
With a young boy, ſweet as his mother's beauty:
May he live to prove more gentle than his grandſire,
And happier than his father.

Pri. Rather live
To bate thee for his bread, and din your ears
With hungry cries; whilſt his unhappy mother
Sits down and weeps in bitterneſs of want.

Jaff. You talk, as if 'twould pleaſe you.

Pri. 'Twould, by heaven!

Jaff. Would I were in my grave.

Pri. And ſhe too with thee:
For, living here, you're but my curs'd remembrances,
I once was happy.——No more.

Jaff. Yes, all, and then adieu for ever.
There's not a wretch, that lives on common charity,
But's happier than me: For I've known
The luſcious ſweets of plenty; every night
Have ſlept with ſoft content about my head,
And never wak'd but to a joyful morning:
Yet now muſt fall like a full ear of corn,
Whoſe bloſſom 'ſcap'd, yet's wither'd in the ripening.

Pri. Home, and be humble, ſtudy to retrench;
Diſcharge the lazy vermin of thy hall,
Thoſe pageants of thy folly:
Reduce the glitt'ring trappings of thy wife
To humble weeds, fit for thy little ſtate:
Then to ſome ſuburb cottage both retire;
Drudge to feed loathſome life; get brats and ſtarve—
Home, home, I ſay.——— [*Exit.*

Jaff.

Jaff. Yes, if my heart would let me———
This proud, this ſwelling heart: home I would go,
But that my doors are hateful to my eyes,
Fill'd and damm'd up with gaping creditors.—
I've now not fifty ducats in the world,
Yet ſtill I'm in love, and pleas'd with ruin.
Oh! *Belvidera!* Oh! ſhe is my wife———
And we will bear our wayward fate together,
But ne'er know comfort more.

Enter PIERRE.

Pier. My friend, good-morrow,
How fares the honeſt part'ner of my heart?
What, melancholy? not a word to ſpare me!
Jaff. I'm thinking, *Pierre*, how that damn'd ſtarving quality,
Call'd honeſty, got footing in the world.
Pier. Why, powerful villainy firſt ſet it up,
For its own eaſe and ſafety: Honeſt men
Are the ſoft eaſy cuſhions, on which knaves
Repoſe and fatten: Were all mankind villains,
They'd ſtarve each other; lawyers would want practice,
Cut-throats rewards: Each man would kill his brother
Himſelf; none would be paid or hang'd for murder:
Honeſty! 'twas a cheat invented firſt
To bind the hands of bold deſerving rogues,
That fools and cowards might ſit ſafe in power,
And lord it uncontroul'd above their betters.
Jaff. Then honeſty is but a notion?
Pier. Nothing elſe,
Like wit, much talk'd of, not to be defin'd:
He that pretends to moſt, too, has leaſt ſhare in't:
'Tis a ragged virtue. Honeſty! no more on't.
Jaff. Sure thou art honeſt?
Pier. So indeed men think me;
But they are miſtaken, *Jaffier:* I am a rogue
As well as they;

A fine, gay, bold-fac'd villain, as thou ſeeſt me.
'Tis true, I pay my debts, when they're contracted;
I ſteal from no man; would not cut a throat
To gain admiſſion to a great man's purſe,
Or a whore's bed; I'd not betray my friend
To get his place or fortune; I ſcorn to flatter
A blown-up fool above me, or cruſh the wretch beneath me:
Yet, *Jaffier*, for all this, I am a villain.

Jaff. A villain!

Pier. Yes, and a moſt notorious villain;
To ſee the ſufferings of my fellow-creatures,
And own myſelf a man: To ſee our ſenators
Cheat the deluded people with a ſhew
Of liberty, which yet they ne'er muſt taſte of.
They ſay, by them our hands are free from fetters,
Yet whom they pleaſe they lay in baſeſt bonds;
Bring whom they pleaſe to infamy and ſorrow;
Drive us like wrecks down the rough tide of power,
Whilſt no hold is to ſave us from deſtruction:
All that bear this are villains, and I one,
Not to rouze up at the greateſt call of nature,
And check the growth of theſe domeſtic ſpoilers,
That make us ſlaves, and tell us 'tis our charter.

Jaff. I think no ſafety can be here for virtue,
And grieve, my friend, as much as thou, to live
In ſuch a wretched ſtate as this of *Venice*,
Where all agree to ſpoil the publick good;
And villains fatten with the brave man's labours.

Pier. We've neither ſafety, unity, nor peace, my friend,
For the foundation's loſt of common good;
Juſtice is lame as well as blind amongſt us;
The laws (corrupted to their ends that make 'em)
Serve but for inſtruments of ſome new tyranny,
That every day ſtarts up to enſlave us deeper.
Now could this glorious cauſe but find out friends
To do it right, oh *Jaffier!* then might'ſt thou
Not wear theſe ſeals of woe upon thy face;
The proud *Priuli* ſhould be taught humanity,

And

And learn to value ſuch a ſon as thou art.
I dare not ſpeak, but my heart bleeds this moment.
Jaff. Curs'd be the cauſe, tho' I thy friend be part on't:
Let me partake the troubles of thy boſom,
For I am us'd to mis'ry, and perhaps
May find a way to ſweeten't to thy ſpirit.
Pier. Too ſoon 'twill reach thy knowledge——
Jaff. Then from thee
Let it proceed. There's virtue in thy friendſhip,
Would make the ſaddeſt tale of ſorrow pleaſing,
Strengthen my conſtancy, and welcome ruin.
Pier. Then thou art ruin'd!
Jaff. That I long ſince knew;
I and ill fortune have been long acquainted.
Pier. I paſs'd this very moment by thy doors,
And found them guarded by a troop of villains;
The ſons of public rapine were deſtroying.
They told me, by the ſentence of the law
They had commiſſion to ſeize all thy fortune:
Nay more, *Priuli*'s cruel hand had ſign'd it.
Here ſtood a ruffian with a horrid face,
Lording it o'er a pile of maſſey plate,
Tumbled into a heap for public ſale;
There was another making villainous jeſts
At thy undoing, he had ta'en poſſeſſion
Of all thy ancient moſt domeſtic ornaments,
Rich hangings intermix'd and wrought with gold:
The very bed, which on thy wedding-night
Receiv'd thee to the arms of *Belvidera*,
The ſcene of all thy joys, was violated
By the coarſe hands of filthy dungeon villains,
And thrown amongſt the common lumber.
Jaff. Now thank heav'n——
Pier. Thank heav'n! for what?
Jaff. That I'm not worth a ducat.
Pier. Curſe thy dull ſtars, and the worſt fate of *Venice*,
Where brothers, friends, and fathers are all falſe;
Where there's no truth, no truſt; where innocence

Stoops

Stoops under vile oppreſſion, and vice lords it.
Hadſt thou but ſeen, as I did, how at laſt
Thy beauteous *Belvidera*, like a wretch
That's doom'd to baniſhment, came weeping forth,
Shining thro' tears, like April ſuns in ſhowers.
Whilſt two young virgins, on whoſe arms ſhe lean'd,
Kindly look'd up, and at her grief grew ſad,
As if they catch'd the ſorrows that fell from her;
E'en the loud rabble, that were gather'd round
To ſee the ſight, ſtood mute when they beheld her;
Govern'd their roaring throats, and grumbled pity:
I cou'd have hugg'd the greaſy rogues; they pleas'd me.

Jaff. I thank thee for this ſtory from my ſoul,
Since now I know the worſt than can befal me:
Ah, *Pierre!* I have a heart that could have borne
The rougheſt wrong my fortune could have done me;
But when I think what *Belvidera* feels,
The bitterneſs her tender ſpirits taſte of,
I own myſelf a coward: Bear my weakneſs;
If, throwing thus my arms about thy neck,
I play the boy, and blubber in thy boſom:
Oh! I ſhall drown thee with my ſorrows.

Pier. Burn,
Firſt burn, and level *Venice* to thy ruin.
What! Starve like beggars brats in froſty weather
Under a hedge, and whine ourſelves to death!
Thou, or thy cauſe, ſhall never want aſſiſtance,
Whilſt I have blood or fortune fit to ſerve thee:
Command my heart; thou'rt every way its maſter.

Jaff. No, there's a ſecret pride in bravely dying.

Pier. Rats die in holes and corners, dogs run mad;
Man knows a braver remedy for ſorrow;
Revenge, the attribute of gods; they ſtamp'd it
With their great image on our natures. Die!
Conſider well the cauſe, that calls upon thee;
And, if thou'rt baſe enough, die then: Remember
Thy *Belvidera* ſuffers, *Belvidera!*
Die—damn firſt—what! Be decently interr'd

In

In a church-yard, and mingle thy brave duſt
With ſtinking rogues, that rot in dirty winding-ſheets,
Surfeit-ſlain fools, the common dung o'th' ſoil!

Jaff. Oh!

Pier. Well ſaid, out with't, ſwear a little——

Jaff. Swear! By ſea and air; by earth, by heav'n and hell,
I will revenge my *Belvidera*'s tears.
Hark thee, my friend—*Priuli*—is—a ſenator.

Pier. A dog.

Jaff. Agreed.

Pier. Shoot him.

Jaff. With all my heart.
No more; where ſhall we meet at night?

Pier. I'll tell thee;
On the *Rialto*, every night at twelve,
I take my evening's walk of meditation:
There we two'll meet, and talk of precious
Miſchief——

Jaff. Farewel.

Pier. At twelve.

Jaff. At any hour; my plagues
Will keep me waking. [*Exit* Pierre.
Tell me why, good heaven,
Thou mad'ſt me what I am, with all the ſpirit,
Aſpiring thoughts, and elegant deſires,
That fill the happieſt man? Ah rather why
Didſt thou not form me ſordid as my fate,
Baſe-minded, dull, and fit to carry burdens?
Why have I ſenſe to know the curſe that's on me?
Is this juſt dealing, nature? *Belvidera!*

Enter Belvidera, *led by two Virgins.*

Poor *Belvidera!*

Bel. Lead me, lead me, my virgins,
To that kind voice. My lord, my love, my refuge!
Happy my eyes, when they behold thy face!
My heavy heart will leave its doleful beating

At

At ſight of thee, and bound with ſprightful joys.
Oh ſmile! as when our loves were in their ſpring,
And chear my fainting ſoul.
Jaff. As when our loves
Were in their ſpring! has then our fortune chang'd?
Art thou not *Belvidera*, ſtill the ſame,
Kind, good, and tender, as my arms firſt found thee?
If thou art alter'd, where ſhall I have harbour?
Where eaſe my loaded heart? Oh! where complain?
Bel. Does this appear like change, or love decaying,
When thus I throw myſelf into thy boſom,
With all the reſolution of ſtrong truth?
I joy more in thee,
Than did thy mother when ſhe hugg'd thee firſt,
And bleſs'd the gods for all her travel paſt.
Jaff. Can there in woman be ſuch glorious faith?
Sure all ill ſtories of thy ſex are falſe!
Oh woman! lovely woman! Nature made thee
To temper man: We had been brutes without you:
Angels are painted fair to look like you:
There's in you all that we believe of heaven,
Amazing brightneſs, purity and truth,
Eternal joy, and everlaſting love.
Bel. If love be treaſure, we'll be wond'rous rich;
O! lead me to ſome deſert wide and wild,
Barren as our misfortunes, where my ſoul
May have its vent, where I may tell aloud,
To the high heav'ns, and ev'ry liſt'ning planet,
With what a boundleſs ſtock my boſom's fraught.
Jaff. Oh *Belvidera!* doubly I'm a beggar,
Undone by fortune, and in debt to thee.
Want, worldly want, that hungry Meagre fiend,
Is at my heels, and chaces me in view.
Can'ſt thou bear cold and hunger? can theſe limbs,
Fram'd for the tender offices of love,
Endure the bitter gripes of ſmarting poverty?
When baniſh'd by our miſeries abroad
(As ſuddenly we ſhall be) to ſeek out
In ſome far climate, where our names are ſtrangers,
For charitable ſuccour; wilt thou then,

When in a bed of ſtraw we ſhrink together,
And the bleak winds ſhall whiſtle round our heads;
Wilt thou then talk thus to me? Wilt thou then
Huſh my cares thus, and ſhelter me with love?

Bel. Oh! I will love thee, even in madneſs love thee;
Tho' my diſtracted ſenſes ſhould forſake me,
I'd find ſome intervals, when my poor heart
Should 'ſwage itſelf, and be let looſe to thine.
Tho' the bare earth be all our reſting-place,
Its roots our food, ſome cleft our habitation,
I'll make this arm a pillow for thine head;
As thou ſighing ly'ſt, and ſwell'd with ſorrow,
Creep to thy boſom, pour the balm of love
Into thy ſoul, and kiſs thee to thy reſt;
Then praiſe our god, and watch thee till the morning.

Jaff. Hear this, you heav'ns! and wonder how you made her:
Reign, reign, ye monarchs that divide the world,
Buſy religion ne'er will let you know
Tranquillity and happineſs like mine;
Like gaudy ſhips, the obſequious billows fall,
And riſe again, to lift you in your pride;
They wait but for a ſtorm, and then devour you:
I in my private bark already wreck'd,
Like a poor merchant driven to unknown land,
That had by chance pack'd up his choiceſt treaſure
In one dear caſket, and ſav'd only that;
Since I muſt wander farther on the ſhore,
Thus hug my little, but my precious ſtore,
Reſolv'd to ſcorn, and truſt my fate no more. [*Ex.*

ACT II. SCENE I.

The Rialto.

Enter Jaffier.

Jaff. I'M here; and thus, the ſhades of night around me,
I look as if all hell were in my heart,
And I in hell. Nay, ſurely 'tis ſo with me!
For, every ſtep I tread, methinks ſome fiend
Knocks at my breaſt, and bids it not be quiet.
I've heard how deſperate wretches, like myſelf,
Have wander'd out at this dead time of night,
To meet the foe of mankind in his walk:
Sure I'm ſo curs'd, that, tho' of heav'n forſaken,
No miniſter of darkneſs cares to tempt me.
Hell, hell, why ſleep'ſt thou?

Enter Pierre.

Pier. Sure I've ſtaid too long:
The clock has ſtruck, and I may loſe my proſelyte.
Speak, who goes there?
Jaff. A dog, that comes to howl
At yonder moon. What's he, that aſks the queſtion?
Pier. A friend to dogs, for they are honeſt creatures,
And ne'er betray their maſters, never fawn
On any that they love not. Well met, friend *Jaffier!*
Jaff. The ſame. O *Pierre*, thou'rt come in ſeaſon,
I was juſt going to pray.
Pier. Ah! that's mechanick;
No praying; it ſpoils buſineſs, and time's precious.
Where's *Belvidera?*
Jaff. For a day or two
I've lodg'd her privately, till I ſee farther

What fortune will do with me. Prithee, friend,
If thou would'ſt have me fit to hear good counſel,
Speak not of *Belvidera*——

Pier. Speak not of her!

Jaff. Oh no!

Pier. Not name her? May be I wiſh her well.

Jaff. Whom well!

Pier. Thy wife, thy lovely *Belvidera.*
I hope a man may wiſh his friend's wife well,
And no harm done.

Jaff. Y'are merry, *Pierre.*

Pier. I am ſo:
Thou ſhall ſmile too, and *Belvidera* ſmile;
We'll all rejoice: here's ſomething to buy pins;
[*Gives him a purſe.*
Marriage is chargeable.

Jaff. I but half wiſh'd
To ſee the devil, and he's here already. Well!
What muſt this buy, rebellion, murder, treaſon?
Tell me, which way I muſt be damn'd for this.

Pier. When laſt we parted, we'd no qualms like theſe,
But entertain'd each other's thoughts like men,
Whoſe ſouls were well acquainted. Is the world
Reform'd ſince our laſt meeting; what new miracles
Have happen'd? Has *Priuli*'s heart relented?
Can he be honeſt?

Jaff. Kind heav'n let heavy curſes
Gall his old age; cramps, aches rack his bones,
And bittereſt diſquiet ring his heart.

Pier. Nay could'ſt thou not
As well, my friend, have ſtretch'd the curſe to all
The ſenate round, as to one ſingle villain?

Jaff. Could I kill with curſing,
By heav'n I know not thirty heads in *Venice*
Should not be blaſted: Senators ſhould rot
Like dogs on dunghills:
Oh! for a curſe to kill with!

Pier. Daggers, daggers are much better.

Jaff. Ha!

Pier.

Pier. Daggers.
Jaff. But where are they?
Pier. Oh! a thouſand
May be diſpos'd of in honeſt hands in *Venice.*
Jaff. Thou talk'ſt in clouds.
Pier. But yet a heart half wrong'd,
As thine has been, would find the meaning, *Jaffier.*
Jaff. A thouſand daggers all in honeſt hands!
And have I not a friend will ſtick one here?
Pier. Yes, if I thought thou wert not to be cheriſh'd
T' a nobler purpoſe, I would be that friend;
But thou haſt better friends; friends whom thy wrongs
Have made thy friends; friends worthy to be call'd ſo.
I'll truſt thee with a ſecret: There are ſpirits
This hour at work. But as thou'rt a man,
Whom I have pick'd and choſen from the world,
Swear that thou wilt be true to what I utter;
And when I've told thee that which only gods,
And men like gods, are privy to, then ſwear
No chance or change ſhall wreſt it from thy boſom.
Jaff. When thou would'ſt bind me, is there need of oaths?
I know thy heart ſo well, I dare lay mine
Before thee, ſet it to what point thou wilt.
Pier. Nay, 'tis a cauſe thou wilt be fond of, *Jaffier;*
For it is founded on the nobleſt baſis,
Our liberties, our natural inheritance.
There's no religion, no hypocriſy in't;
We'll do the buſineſs, and ne'er faſt and pray for't:
Openly act a deed the world may gaze
With wonder at, and envy when 'tis done.
Jaff. For liberty!
Pier. For liberty, my friend;
Thou ſhalt be freed from baſe *Priuli*'s tyranny,
And thy ſequeſter'd fortunes heal'd again:
I ſhall be free from thoſe opprobrious wrongs,
That preſs me now, and bend my ſpirit downward;
All *Venice* free, and every growing merit
Succeed to its juſt right: Fools ſhall be pull'd

From wiſdom's ſeat; thoſe baleful unclean birds,
Thoſe lazy owls, who (perch'd near fortune's top)
Sit only watchful with their heavy wings
To cuff down new fledg'd virtues, that would riſe
To nobler heights, and make the grove harmonious.

Jaff. What can I do?

Pier. Canſt thou not kill a ſenator?

Jaff. Were there one wiſe or honeſt, I could kill him
For herding with that neſt of fools or knaves.
By all my wrongs, thou talk'ſt as if revenge
Were to be had; and the brave ſtory warms me.

Pier. Swear then!

Jaff. I do, by all thoſe glittering ſtars,
And yon great ruling planet of the night,
By all good powers above and ill below,
By love and friendſhip dearer than my life,
No pow'r or death ſhall make me falſe to thee.

Pier. Here we embrace, and I'll unlock my heart.
A council's held hard by, where the deſtruction
Of this great empire's hatching: There I'll lead thee.
But be a man, for thou art to mix with men
Fit to diſturb the peace all the world,
And rule it when 'tis wildeſt—

Jaff. I give thee thanks
For this kind warning: Yes, I'll be a man;
And charge thee, *Pierre*, whene'er thou ſeeſt my fears
Betray me leſs, to rip this heart of mine
Out of my breaſt, and ſhew it for a coward's.
Come, let's be gone, for from this hour I chace
All little thoughts, all tender human follies,
Out of my boſom: Vengeance ſhall have room:
Revenge!

Pier. And liberty!

Jaff. Revenge!

Pier. And liberty!

Jaff. Revenge! Revenge—— [*Exeunt.*

The

The SCENE *changes to* Aquilina's *Houſe, the Greek Courtezan.*

Enter Renault.

Ren. Why was my choice ambition, the worſt ground
A wretch can build on? 'tis indeed, at a diſtance,
A good proſpect, tempting to the view;
The height delights us, and the mountain-top
Looks beautiful, becauſe 'tis nigh to heav'n;
But we ne'er think how ſandy's the foundation,
What ſtorm will batter, and what tempeſt ſhake us.
Who's there?

Enter Spinoſa.

Spin. Renault, good-morrow, for by this time
I think the ſcale of night has turn'd the balance,
And weighs up morning? Has the clock ſtruck twelve?
Ren. Yes; clocks will go as they ſet: But man,
Irregular man's ne'er conſtant, never certain:
I've ſpent at leaſt three precious hours of darkneſs
In waiting dull attendance; 'tis the curſe
Of diligent virtue to be mixt, like mine,
With giddy tempers, ſouls but half reſolv'd.
Spin. Hell ſeize that ſoul amongſt us, it can frighten.
Ren. What's then the cauſe that I am here alone?
Why are we not together?

Enter Eliot.

O, Sir, welcome!
You are an *Engliſhman:* When treaſon's hatching,
One might have thought you'd not have been behind-hand.
In what whore's lap have you been lolling?
Give but an *Engliſhman* his whore and eaſe,
Beef,

Beef, and a ſea-coal fire, he's yours for ever.

Eli. Frenchman, you are ſaucy.

Ren. How?

Enter Bedamar *the Ambaſſador*, Theodore, Bramveil, Durand, Brabe, Revillido, Mezzana, Ternon, Retroſi, *Conſpirators*.

Bed. At difference, fie!
Is this a time for quarrels? Thieves and rogues
Fall out and brawl: Should men of your high calling,
Men ſeparated by the choice of providence
From the groſs heap of mankind, and ſet here
In this aſſembly as in one great jewel,
T' adorn the braveſt purpoſe it e'er ſmil'd on;
Should you, like boys, wrangle for trifles?

Ren. Boys!

Bed. Renault, thy hand.

Ren. I thought I'd given my heart
Long ſince to every man that mingles here;
But grieve to find it truſted with ſuch tempers,
That can't forgive my froward age its weakneſs.

Bed. Eliot, thou once had'ſt virtue; I have ſeen
Thy ſtubborn temper bend with god-like goodneſs,
Not half thus courted: 'Tis thy nation's glory,
To hug the foe that offers brave alliance.
Once more embrace, my friend—we'll all take hands.
United thus, we are the mighty engine
Muſt twiſt this rooted empire from its baſis.
Totters not it already?

Eli. Would 'twere tumbling.

Bed. Nay, it ſhall down: This night we ſeal its ruin.

Enter Pierre.

Oh! *Pierre*, thou art welcome.
Come to my breaſt, for by its hopes thou look'ſt
Lovelily dreadful, and the fate of *Venice*
Seems on thy ſword already. Oh! my *Mars!*

The

The poets, that firſt feign'd a god of war,
Sure propheſy'd of thee.
Pier. Friends, was not *Brutus*,
(I mean that *Brutus*, who in open ſenate
Stabb'd the firſt *Cæſar* that uſurp'd the world)
A gallant man?
Ren. Yes, and *Cataline* too;
Tho' ſtory wrong his fame: For he conſpir'd
To prop the reeling glory of his country:
His cauſe was good.
Bed. And our's as much above it,
As, *Renault*, thou'rt ſuperior to *Cethegus*,
Or *Pierre*, to *Caſſius*.
Pier. Then to what we aim at,
When do we ſtart? or muſt we talk for ever?
Bed. No, *Pierre*, the deed's near birth: Fate ſeems
to have ſet
The Buſineſs up, and given it to our care:
I hope there's not a heart or hand amongſt us,
But is firm and ready.
All. All.
We'll die with *Bedamar*.
Bed. O men,
Matchleſs! as will your glory be hereafter:
The game is for a matchleſs prize, if won:
If loſt, diſgraceful ruin.
Pier. Ten thouſand men are armed at your nod,
Commanded all by leaders fit to guide
A battle for the freedom of the world:
This wretched ſtate has ſtarv'd them in its ſervice;
And, by your bounty quicken'd, they're reſolv'd
To ſerve your glory, and revenge their own:
They've all their different quarters in this city,
Watch for the alarm, and grumble 'tis ſo tardy.
Bed. I doubt not, friend, but thy unwearied dili-
Has ſtill kept waking, and it ſhall have eaſe; (gence
After this night it is reſolv'd we meet
No more, till *Venice* owns us for her lords.
Pier. How lovelily the *Adriatic* whore,
Dreſs'd in her flames, will ſhine! devouring flames!

Such

Such as ſhall burn her to the watry bottom,
And hiſs in her foundations.

Bed. Now if any
Amongſt us, that owns this glorious cauſe,
Have friends or intereſt he'd wiſh to ſave,
Let it be told: The general doom is ſeal'd.
But I'd forego the hopes of a world's empire,
Rather than wound the bowels of my friend.

Pier. I muſt confeſs, you there have touch'd my weakneſs,
I have a friend, hear it! ſuch a friend!
My heart was ne'er ſhut to him. Nay, I tell you,
He knows the very buſineſs of this hour;
But he rejoices in the cauſe, and loves it:
We've chang'd a vow to live and die together,
And he's at hand to ratify it here.

Ren. How! all betray'd.

Pier. No—I've dealt nobly with you,
I've brought my all into the public ſtock:
I'd but one friend, and him I'll ſhare amongſt you:
Receive and cheriſh him; or if, when ſeen
And ſearch'd, you find him worthleſs, as my tongue
Has lodg'd this ſecret in his faithful breaſt,
To eaſe your fears I wear a dagger here
Shall rip it out again, and give you reſt.
Come forth, thou only good I e'er could boaſt of.

Enter Jaffier *with a dagger.*

Bed. His preſence bears the ſhew of manly virtue.

Jaff. I know you'll wonder all, that thus uncall'd
I dare approach this place of fatal council;
But I'm amongſt you, and by heav'n it glads me,
To ſee ſo many virtues thus united,
To reſtore juſtice, and dethrone oppreſſion.
Command this ſword, if you would have it quiet,
Into this breaſt; but, if you think it worthy
To cut the throats of reverend rogues in robes,
Send me into the curs'd aſſembled ſenate:
It ſhrinks not, tho' I meet a father there.

Would

Would you behold this city flaming? Here's
A hand ſhall bear a lighted torch at noon
To th' arſenal, and ſet its gates on fire.
Ren. You talk this well, Sir.
Jaff. Nay——by heaven I'll do this.
Come, come, I read diſtruſt in all your faces;
But I come ripe with wrongs, as you with councils;
I hate this ſenate, am a foe to *Venice*;
A friend to none, but men reſolv'd like me
To puſh on miſchief. Oh! did you but know me,
I need not talk thus!
Bed Pierre, I muſt embrace him,
My heart beats to this man, as if it knew him.
Ren. I never lov'd theſe huggers.
Jaff. Still I ſee your friends ſurvey me
As I were dangerous——but I come arm'd
Againſt all doubts, and to your truſt will give
A pledge, worth more than all the world can pay for,
My *Belvidera*. Ho! my *Belvidera!*
Bed. What wonder next?
Jaff. Let me intreat you,
As I have henceforth hope to call you friends,
That all but the ambaſſador, this
Grave guide of councils, with my friend that owns me,
Withdraw a while to ſpare a woman's bluſhes.
[*Exeunt all but* Bed. Ren. Jaff. Pier.
Bed. Pierre, whither will this ceremony lead us?
Jaff. My *Belvidera! Belvidera!*

Enter Belvidera.

Bel. Who?
Who calls ſo loud at this late peaceful hour?
That voice was wont to come in gentle whiſpers,
And fill my ears with the ſoft breath of love:
Thou hourly image of my thoughts, where art thou?
Jaff. Indeed 'tis late.
Bel. Alas! where am I! whither is't you lead me!
Methinks I read diſtraction in your face.

You

You ſhake and tremble too! your blood runs cold!
Heav'ns guard my love, and bleſs his heart with patience.

Jaff. That I have patience, let our fate bear witneſs,
Who has ordain'd it ſo, that thou and I,
(Thou, the divineſt good man e'er poſſeſs'd,
And I, the wretched'ſt of the race of man)
This very hour without one tear muſt part.

Bel. Part! muſt we part? Oh! am I then forſaken?
Why drag you from me? whither are you going?
My dear! my life! my love!

Jaff. Oh! friend!

Bel. Speak to me.

Jaff. Take her from my heart,
She'll gain ſuch hold elſe, I ſhall ne'er get looſe;
I charge thee take her, but with tend'reſt care
Relieve her troubles, and aſſwage her ſorrows.

Ren. Riſe madam, and command amongſt your ſervants.

Jaff. To you, Sirs, and your honours, I bequeath her,
And with her this, when I prove unworthy——

[*Gives a Dagger.*

You know the reſt——Then ſtrike it to her heart;
And tell her, he who three whole happy years
Lay in her arms, and each kind night repeated
The paſſionate vows ſtill of increaſing love,
Sent that reward for all her truth and ſufferings.

Bel. Nay, take my life, ſince he has ſold it cheaply;
O! thou unkind one;
Ne'er meet more! have I deſerv'd this from you?
Look on me, tell me; ſpeak thou dear deceiver.
Why am I ſeparated from thy love?
If I am falſe, accuſe me; but if true,
Don't, prithee don't, in poverty forſake me;
But pity the ſad heart, that's torn with parting.
Yet hear me? yet recal me——

[*Exit* Ren. Bed. *and* Bel.

Jaff. Oh! my heart ſtrings!

My

My friend, where art thou?

Pier. Here, my honour's brother.

Jaff. Is *Belvidera* gone?

Pier. *Renault* has led her
Back to her own apartment; but, by heav'n,
Thou muſt not ſee her more, till our work's over.

Jaff. Not ſee her?

Pier. Not for your life.

Jaff. O *Pierre*, were ſhe but here,
How I would pull her down into my heart,
Gaze on her till my eye-ſtrings crack'd with love;
Then ſwelling, ſighing, raging to be bleſt,
Come like a panting turtle to her breaſt;
On her ſoft boſom hovering, bill and play,
Confeſs the cauſe why laſt I fled away;
Own 'was a fault, but ſwear to give it o'er,
And never follow falſe ambition more. [*Exeunt.*

ACT III.

SCENE *Continues.*

Enter Belvidera.

Bel. I'M ſacrific'd! I'm ſold! betray'd to ſhame!
Inevitable ruin has inclos'd me!
He that ſhould guard my virtue, has betray'd it;
Left me! undone me! Oh that I could hate him!
Where ſhall I go? Oh whither, whither wander!

Enter Jaffier.

Jaff. Can *Belvidera* want a reſting-place,
When theſe poor arms are ready to receive her!
There was a time———
Bel. Yes, yes, there was a time
When *Belvidera*'s tears, her cries, and ſorrows,
Were not deſpis'd; when, if ſhe chanc'd to ſigh,
Or look but ſad;———there was indeed a time,
When *Jaffier* would have ta'en her in his arms,
Eas'd her declining head upon his breaſt,
And never left her till he found the cauſe.
Jaff. Oh! *Porcia! Porcia!* What a ſoul was thine?
Bel. That *Porcia* was a woman; and when *Brutus*,
Big with the fate of *Rome*, (heav'n guard thy ſafety!)
Conceal'd from her the labours of his mind;
She let him ſee her blood was great as his;
Flow'd from a ſpring as noble, and a heart
Fit to partake his troubles, as his love.
Fetch, fetch that dagger back, the dreadful dower
Thou gav'ſt laſt night in parting with me; ſtrike it
Here to my heart, and, as the blood flows from it,
Judge if it run not pure as that of *Cato*'s daughter.
Jaff. Oh! *Belvidera!*

Bel.

Bel. Why was I laſt night deliver'd to a villain?
Jaff. Ha! a villain?
Bel. Yes, to a villain! Why at ſuch an hour
Meets that aſſembly, all made up of wretches?
Why, I in this hand, and in that a dagger,
Was I deliver'd with ſuch dreadful ceremonies?
" To you, Sirs, and to your honour I bequeath her,
" And with her this: Whene'er I prove unworthy—
" You know the reſt—then ſtrike it to her heart.
Oh! why's that reſt conceal'd from me? muſt I
Be made the hoſtage of an helliſh truſt?
For ſuch I know I am; that's all my value:
But, by the love and loyalty I owe thee,
I'll free thee from the bondage of theſe ſlaves;——
Strait to the ſenate, tell 'em all I know,
All that I think, all that my fears inform me.
Jaff. Is this the *Roman* virtue? this the blood
That boaſts its purity with *Cato*'s daughter!
Would ſhe have e'er betray'd her *Brutus?*
Bel. No:
For *Brutus* truſted her: Wert thou ſo kind,
What would not *Belvidera* ſuffer for thee?
Jaff. I ſhall undo myſelf, and tell thee all.
Yet think a little, e're thou tempt me farther;
Think I've a tale to tell will ſhake thy nature,
Melt all this boaſted conſtancy thou talk'ſt of,
Into vile tears and deſpicable ſorrows:
Then, if thou ſhould'ſt betray me!
Bel. Shall I ſwear?
Jaff. No, do not ſwear: I would not violate
Thy tender nature with ſo rude a bond:
But as thou hop'ſt to ſee me live my days,
And love thee long, lock this within thy breaſt:
I've bound myſelf by all the ſtricteſt ſacraments,
Divine and human———
Bel. Speak!
Jaff. To kill thy father——
Bel. My father!
Jaff. Nay, the throats of the whole ſenate
Shall bleed, my *Belvidera:* He, amongſt us,

That ſpares his father, brother, or his friend,
Is damn'd.

Bel. Oh!

Jaff. Have a care, and ſhrink not even in thought;
For if thou doſt——

Bel. I know it, thou wilt kill me.
Do, ſtrike thy ſword into this boſom; lay me
Dead on the earth, and then thou wilt be ſafe——
Murder my father!—tho' his cruel nature
Has perſecuted me to my undoing;
Driven me to baſeſt wants; can I behold him,
With ſmiles of vengeance, butcher'd in his age?
The ſacred fountain of my life deſtroy'd?
And can'ſt thou ſhed the blood that gave me being?
Nay, be a traitor too, and ſell thy country?
Can thy great heart deſcend ſo vilely low,
Mix with hir'd ſlaves, bravos, and common ſtabbers,
Join with ſuch a crew, and take a ruffian's wages,
To cut the throats of wretches as they ſleep?

Jaff. Thou wrong'ſt me, *Belvidera!* I've engag'd
With men of ſouls, fit to reform the ills
Of all mankind: There's not a heart amongſt them
But's ſtout as death, yet honeſt as the nature
Of man firſt made, ere fraud and vice were faſhions.

Bel. What's he, to whoſe curs'd hands laſt night
thou gav'ſt me?
Was that well done?—Oh! I could tell a ſtory,
Would rouze thy lion heart out of its den,
And make it rage with terrifying fury.

Jaff. Speak on, I charge thee.

Bel. Oh, my love! if e'er
Thy *Belvidera*'s peace deſerv'd thy care,
Remove me from this place.——Laſt night, laſt night.

Jaff. Diſtract me not; but give me all the truth.

Bel. No ſooner wert thou gone, and I alone,
Left in the power of that old ſon of miſchief;
No ſooner was I lain on my ſad bed,
But that vile wretch approach'd me, looſe, unbutton'd
Ready for violation: Then my heart
Throb'd with its fears. Oh! how I wept and ſigh'd!

And

And ſhrunk and trembled! wiſh'd in vain for him
That ſhould protect me! Thou, alas, wert gone.
Jaff. Patience, ſweet heav'n! till I make vengeance ſure.
Bel. He drew the hideous dagger forth thou gav'ſt him,
And with upbraiding ſmiles he ſaid, Behold it,
This is the pledge of a falſe huſband's love.——
And in my arms then preſs'd, and would have claſpt me;
But with my cries I ſcar'd his coward heart,
Till he withdrew, and mutter'd vows to hell.
Theſe are thy friends! with theſe thy life, thy honour,
Thy love, all are ſtak'd, and all will go to ruin.
Jaff. No more; I charge thee keep this ſecret cloſe;
Clear up thy ſorrows, look as if thy wrongs
Were all forgot, and treat him like a friend,
As no complaint were made. No more, retire;
Retire, my love, and doubt not of my honour;
I'll heal its failings, and deſerve thy love.
Bel. Oh! ſhould I part with thee, I fear thou wilt
In anger leave me, and return no more.
Jaff. Return no more! I would not live without thee
Another night to purchaſe the creation.
Bel. When ſhall we meet again?
Jaff. Anon at twelve
I'll ſteal myſelf to thy expecting arms,
Come like a travell'd dove, and bring thee peace.
Bel. Indeed!
Jaff. By all our loves.
Bel. 'Tis hard to part:
But ſure no falſhood ever look'd ſo fairly.
Farewel; remember twelve. [*Exit.*
Jaff. Let heaven forget me,
When I remember not thy truth, thy love.

Enter Pierre.

Pier. Jaffier!
Jaff. Who calls?

Pier. A friend, that could have wiſh'd
T' have found thee otherwiſe employ'd—What, hunt
A wife on the dull ſoil! ſure, a ſtaunch huſband
Of all hounds is the dulleſt.—Wilt thou never,
Never be wean'd from caudles and confections;
What feminine tales haſt thou been liſt'ning to,
Of unair'd ſhirts, catarrhs and tooth-ach, got
By thin-ſoal'd ſhoes?—Damnation! that a fellow,
Choſen to be a ſharer in the deſtruction
Of a whole people, ſhould ſneak thus in corners,
To eaſe his fulſome luſts, and fool his mind.

Jaff. May not a man then trifle out an hour
With a kind woman, and not wrong his calling!

Pier. Not in a cauſe like ours.

Jaff. Then, friend, our cauſe
Is in a damn'd condition; for I'll tell thee,
That canker-worm, call'd leachery, has touch'd it;
'Tis tainted vilely: Would'ſt thou think it? *Renault*
(That mortify'd old wither'd winter rogue)
Loves ſimple fornication like a prieſt;
I found him out for watering at my wife;
He viſited her laſt night, like a kind guardian:
Faith, ſhe has ſome temptation, that's the truth on't.

Pier. He durſt not wrong his truſt.

Jaff. 'Twas ſomething late through,
To take the freedom of a lady's chamber.

Pier. Was ſhe in bed?

Jaff. Yes, faith! in virgin-ſheets,
White as her boſom, *Pierre*, diſh'd neatly up,
Might tempt a weaker appetite to taſte.
Oh! how the old fox ſtunk, I warrant thee,
When the rank fit was on him.

Pier. Patience guide me!
He us'd no violence?

Jaff. No, no, out on't, violence!
Play'd with her neck! bruſh'd her with his grey beard,
Struggl'd and touz'd, tickl'd her till ſhe ſqueak'd a little,
May be, or ſo—but not a jot of violence—

Pier. Damn him.

Jaff.

Jaff. Ay, ſo ſay I: But huſh, no more on't;
All hitherto is well, and I believe
Myſelf no monſter yet:
Sure 'tis near the hour
We all ſhould meet for our concluding orders:
Will the ambaſſador be here in perſon?
Pier. No: he has ſent commiſſion to that villain *Renault*
To give the executing charge:
I'd have thee be a man, if poſſible,
And keep thy temper: for a brave revenge
Ne'er comes too late.
Jaff. Fear not, I am as cool as patience.
Pier. He's yonder, coming this way thro' the hall;
His thoughts ſeem full.
Jaff. Prithee retire, and leave me
With him alone: I'll put him to ſome trial;
See how his rotten part will bear the touching.
Pier. Be careful then. [*Exit.*
Jaff. Nay, never doubt, but truſt me.——
What, be a devil! take a damning oath
For ſhedding native blood!—Can there be a ſin
In merciful repentance?—Oh! this villain!

Enter Renault.

Ren. Perverſe and peeviſh: What a ſlave is man,
To let his itching fleſh thus get the better of him?
Diſpatch the tool her huſband—that were well.
Who's there?
Jaff. A man.
Ren. My friend my near ally,
The hoſtage of your faith, my beauteous charge, is very well.
Jaff. Sir, are you ſure of that?
Stands ſhe in perfect health? beats her pulſe even?
Neither too hot nor cold?
Ren. What means that queſtion?
Jaff Oh! women have fantaſtick conſtitutions,
Inconſtant as their wiſhes.

Was

Was it not boldly done
Even at firſt ſight to truſt the thing I lov'd
(A tempting treaſure too) with youth ſo fierce
And vigorous as thine? But thou art honeſt.
Ren. Who dare accuſe me?
Jaff. Curs'd be he that doubts
Thy virtue; I have try'd it, and declare,
Were I to chuſe a guardian of my honour,
I'd put it in thy keeping: For I know thee.
Ren. Know me!
Jaff. Ay, know thee: There's no falſhood in thee,
Thou look'ſt juſt as thou art: let us embrace.
Now would'ſt thou cut my throat, or I cut thine.
Ren. You dare not do't.
Jaff. You lye, Sir.
Ren. How!
Jaff. No more.
'Tis a baſe world, and muſt reform;——that's all.

Enter Spinoſa, Theodore, Eliot, Revellido, Durand, Bramveil, *and the reſt of the Conſpirators.*

Ren. Spinoſa, Theodore.
Spin. The ſame.
Ren. You are welcome.
Spin. You are trembling, Sir.
Ren. 'Tis a cold night, indeed; I am aged,
Full of decay, and natural infirmities;
[Pier. *re-enters.*
We ſhall be warm, my friends, I hope, to morrow.
Pier. 'Twas not well done; thou ſhould'ſt have ſtroak'd him,
And not have gaul'd him.
Jaff. Damn him, let him chew on't.——
Heav'n! Where am I? beſet with curſed fiends,
That wait to damn me! What a devil's man,
When he forgets his nature——Huſh, my heart.
Ren. My friends, 'tis late: Are we aſſembled all?
Omnes. All, all.
Ren. Oh! you're men I find,

Fit

Fit to behold your fate, and meet her ſummons:
To morrow's riſing ſun muſt ſee you all
Deck'd in your honours.—Are the ſoldiers ready?

Pier. All, all.

Ren. You, *Durand*, with your thouſand muſt poſſeſs
St. *Mark*'s; you captain, know your charge already:
'Tis to ſecure the ducal palace: You,
Brabe, with a hundred more, muſt gain the *Secque:*
With the like number, *Bramveil*, to the *Procurale.*
Be all this done with the leaſt tumult poſſible,
'Till in each place you poſt ſufficient guards:
Then ſheath your ſwords in every breaſt you meet.

Jaff. Oh! reverend cruelty! damn'd bloody villain!

Ren. During this execution, *Durand*, you
Muſt in the midſt keep your battalia faſt;
And, Theodore, be ſure to plant the cannon
That may command the ſtreets.
This done, we'll give the general alarm,
Apply petards, and force the ars'nal gates;
Then fire the city round in ſeveral places,
Or with our cannon (if it dare reſiſt)
Batter't to ruin. But above all I charge you,
Shed blood enough, ſpare neither ſex nor age,
Name nor condition; if there lives a ſenator
After to-morrow, though the dulleſt rogue
That e'er ſaid nothing, we have loſt our ends:
If poſſible, let's kill the very name
Of ſenators, and bury it in blood.

Jaff. Mercileſs horrid ſlave!—Ay, blood enough!
Shed blood enough, old *Renault*! how thou charm'ſt me!

Ren. But one thing more, and then farewel, till fate
Join us again, or ſeparate us ever:
But let us all remember,
We wear no common cauſe upon our ſword:
Let each man think, that on his ſingle virtue
Depends the good and fame of all the reſt;
Eternal honour, or perpetual infamy.
You droop, Sir.

Jaff.

Jaff. No: with moſt profound attention
I've heard it all, and wonder at thy virtue.
Ren. Let's conſider,
That we deſtroy oppreſſion, avarice,
A people nurs'd up equally with vices
And loathſome luſt, which nature moſt abhors,
And ſuch as without ſhame ſhe cannot ſuffer.
Jaff. Oh! *Belvidera*, take me to thy arms,
And ſhew where's my peace, for I have loſt it. [*Exit.*
Ren. Without the leaſt remorſe then let's reſolve
With fire and ſword t' exterminate theſe tyrants;
Under whoſe weight this wretched country labours:
The means are only in our hands to crown them.
Pier. And may thoſe powers above, that are propitious
To gallant minds, record this cauſe and bleſs it.
Ren. Thus happy, thus ſecure of all we wiſh for,
Should there, my friends, be found amongſt us one
Falſe to this glorious enterprize, what fate,
What vengeance were enough for ſuch a villain?
Eli. Death here without repentance, hell hereafter.
Ren. Let that be my lot, if, as here I ſtand,
Liſted by fate among her darling ſons,
Tho' I had one only brother, dear by all
The ſtricteſt ties of nature;
Could I have ſuch a friend
Join'd in this cauſe, and had but ground to fear
He meant foul play; may this right hand drop from me,
If I'd not hazard all my future peace,
And ſtab him to the heart before you. Who?
Who would do leſs? would'ſt thou not, *Pierre*, the ſame?
Pier. You've ſingled me, Sir, out for this hard queſtion,
As if 'twere ſtarted only for my ſake?
Am I the thing you fear? Here, here's my boſom,
Search it with all your ſwords: Am I a traytor?
Ren. No: But I fear your late commended friend
Is little leſs: Come, Sirs, 'tis now no time

To

To trifle with our ſafety. Where's this *Jaffier?*

Spin. He left the room juſt now in ſtrange diſorder.

Ren. Nay, there is danger in him: I obſerv'd him;
During the time I took for explanation,
His looks grew full of ſadneſs and ſurprize,
All which betray'd a wavering ſpirit in him.
What's requiſite for ſafety muſt be done
With ſpeedy execution; he remains
Yet in our power: I for my own part wear
A dagger———

Pier. Well.

Ren. And I could wiſh it——

Pier. Where?

Ren. Bury'd in his heart.

Pier. Away; we're yet all friends;
No more of this, 'twill breed ill blood among us.

Spin. Let us all draw our ſwords and ſearch the houſe;
Pull him from the dark hole where he ſits brooding
O'er his cold fears, and each man kill his ſhare of him.

Pier. Who talks of killing? who's he'll ſhed the blood,
That's dear to me? Is't you? or you, Sir?
What, not one ſpeak? How you ſtand gaping all
On your grave oracle, your wooden god there!
Yet not a word! Then, Sir, I'll tell y' a ſecret;
Suſpicion's but at beſt a coward's virtue. [*To* Ren.

Ren. A coward!——— [*Handles his ſword.*

Pier. Put up thy ſword, old man,
Thy hand ſhakes at it. Come, let's heal this breach;
I am too hot:——We yet may all live friends.

Spin. Till we are ſafe, our friendſhip cannot be ſo.

Pier. Again! Who's that?

Spin. 'Twas I.

Theod. And I.

Rev. And I.

Eli. And all.

Ren. Who are on my ſide?

Spin. Every honeſt ſword.——
Let's die like men, and not be ſold like ſlaves.

Pier.

Pier. One ſuch word more, by heav'n I'll to the ſenate,
And hang ye all, like dogs, in cluſters.
Why weep your coward ſwords half out their ſhells?
Why do you not all brandiſh them like mine?
You fear to die, and yet dare talk of killing.

Ren. Go to the ſenate, and betray us! haſte,
Secure thy wretched life; we fear to die
Leſs than thou dar'ſt be honeſt.

Pier. That's a rank falſhood;
Fear'ſt not thou death? Fie, there's a knaviſh itch
In that ſalt blood, an utter foe to ſmarting.
Had *Jaffier*'s wife prov'd kind, he'd ſtill been true.
Faugh—how that ſtinks?
Thou die! thou kill my friend, or thou, or thou,
Away; diſperſe all to your ſeveral charges,
And meet to-morrow where your honour calls you;
I'll bring that man, whoſe blood you ſo much thirſt for,
And you ſhall ſee him venture for you fairly——
Hence, hence, I ſay. [*Exit* Renault *angrily.*

Spin. I fear we have been to blame,
And done too much.
Forgive us, gallant friend.

Pier. Nay, now you've found
The way to melt, and caſt me as you will.
Oh! What a dangerous precipice have we 'ſcap'd!
How near a fall was all we'd long been building!
What an eternal blot had ſtain'd our glories,
If one, the braveſt and beſt of men,
Had fall'n a ſacrifice to raſh ſuſpicion,
Butcher'd by thoſe whoſe cauſe he came to cheriſh!
Come but to-morrow, all your doubts ſhall end,
And to your loves me better recommend,
That I've preſerv'd your fame, and ſav'd my friend.
[*Exeunt.*

ACT

ACT IV. SCENE I.

The Rialto.

Enter Jaffier *and* Belvidera.

Jaff. WHere doſt thou lead me? Ev'ry ſtep I move,
Methinks I tread upon ſome mangled limb
Of a rack'd friend: O my charming ruin!
Where are we wandering?
Bel. To eternal honour.
To do a deed ſhall chronicle thy name,
Among the glorious legends of thoſe few,
That have ſav'd ſinking nations: Thy renown
Shall be the future ſong of all the virgins,
Who by thy piety have been preſerv'd
From horrid violation. Every ſtreet
Shall be adorn'd with ſtatues to thy honour,
And at thy feet this great inſcription written.
Remember him that prop'd the fall of *Venice.*
Jaff. Rather, remember him, who, after all
The ſacred bonds of oaths, and holier friendſhip,
In fond compaſſion to a woman's tears,
Forgot his manhood, virtue, truth, and honour,
To ſacrifice the boſom that reliev'd him.—
Why wilt thou damn me?
Bel. Oh, inconſtant man!
How will you promiſe! How will you deceive!
Do, return back, and replace me in my bondage;
Tell all thy friends how dang'rouſly thou lov'ſt me,
And let thy dagger do its bloody office.—
Or, if thou think'ſt it nobler, let me live,
Till I'm a victim to the hateful luſt
Of that infernal devil.—Laſt night, my love!
Jaff. Name it not again:
It ſhews a beaſtly image to my fancy,

Will wake me into madneſs. Oh! the villain!
That durſt approach ſuch purity as thine
On terms ſo vile: Deſtruction, ſwift deſtruction,
Fall on my coward head,
If I forgive him.

Bel. Delay no longer then, but to the ſenate,
And tell the diſmall'ſt ſtory ever utter'd:
Tell 'em what bloodſhed, rapines, deſolations,
Have been prepar'd: How near's the fatal hour.
Save thy poor country, ſave the reverend blood
Of all its nobles, which to-morrow's dawn
Muſt elſe ſee ſhed.

Jaff. Oh!

Bel. Think what then may prove
My lot; the raviſher may then come ſafe,
And 'midſt the terror of the public ruin
Do a damn'd deed; perhaps may lay a train
To catch thy life: Then where will be revenge,
The dear revenge that's due to ſuch a wrong?

Jaff. By all heav'n's powers, prophetick truth dwells in thee,
For every word thou ſpeak'ſt ſtrikes thro' my heart,
Like a new light, and ſhews it how't has wander'd.
Come, lead me forward now like a tame lamb
To ſacrifice. Thus, in his fatal garlands
Deck'd fine and pleas'd, the wanton ſkips and plays,
Trots by th' enticing flatt'ring prieſteſs' ſide,
And, much tranſported with its little pride,
Forgets his dear companions of the plain;
'Till, by her bound, he's on the altar lain,
Yet then too, hardly bleats, ſuch pleaſure's in the pain.

Enter Officer, *and Guards.*

Offi. Stand, who goes there?

Bel. Friends.

Offi. But what friends are you?

Bel. Friends to the ſenate, and the ſtate of *Venice.*

Offi. My orders are to ſeize on all I find
At this late hour, and bring 'em to the council,

Who

Who are now ſitting.

Jaff. Sir, you ſhall be obey'd.
Now the lot's caſt, and fate do what thou wilt.

[*Exeunt guarded.*

SCENE II.

The Senate-Houſe.

Where appear ſitting the Duke of Venice, Priuli, *and other Senators.*

Duke. Antony, Priuli, ſenators of *Venice,*
Speak, why are we aſſembled here this night;
What have you to inform us of, concerns
The ſtate of *Venice*' honour, or its ſafety?

Pri. Could words expreſs the ſtory I've to tell you,
Fathers, theſe tears were uſeleſs, theſe ſad tears
That fall from my old eyes; but there is cauſe
We all ſhould weep, tear off theſe purple robes,
And wrap ourſelves in ſackcloth, ſitting down
On the ſad earth, and cry aloud to heav'n:
Heav'n knows if yet there be an hour to come,
Ere *Venice* be no more.

All Sen. How!

Pri. Nay, we ſtand
Upon the very brink of gaping ruin.
Within this city's form'd a dark conſpiracy
To maſſacre us all, our wives and children,
Kindred and friends, our palaces and temples
To lay in aſhes: Nay, the hour too fix'd;
The ſwords, for aught I know, drawn e'en this moment,
And the wild waſte begun.—From unknown hands
I had this warning:—But, if we are men,
Let's not be tamely butcher'd, but do ſomething
That may inform the world, in after-ages,
Our virtue was not ruin'd, tho' we were.

[*A Noiſe without.*

Offi. Room, room, make room for ſome priſoners—

Enter Officer, *and Guards.*

Duke. Speak there. What diſturbance?
Offi. Two priſoners I have ſeiz'd in the ſtreets,
Who ſay, they come to inform this reverend ſenate
About the preſent danger.

Enter Jaffier, *guarded.*

All. Give 'em entrance—well, who are you?
Jaff. A villain.
Would every man, that hears me,
Would deal ſo honeſtly, and own his title.
Duke. 'Tis rumour'd, that a plot has been contriv'd
Againſt this ſtate; that you have a ſhare in't too.
If you are a villain, to redeem your honour,
Unfold the truth, and be reſtor'd with mercy.
Jaff. Think not, that I to ſave my life came hither;
I know its value better; but in pity
To all thoſe wretches, whoſe unhappy dooms
Are fix'd and ſeal'd.—You ſee me here before you,
The ſworn and covenanted foe of *Venice*:—
But uſe me as my dealings may deſerve,
And I may prove a friend.
Duke. The ſlave capitulates;
Give him the tortures.
Jaff. Give him the tortures! Name but ſuch a thing
Again, by heav'n I'll ſhut theſe lips for ever.—
Not all your racks, your engines, or your wheels,
Shall force a groan away, that you may gueſs at.
Duke. Name your conditions.
Jaff. For myſelf full pardon,
Beſides the lives of two and twenty friends.
Swear this,
And I'll unfold the ſecret of your danger.
Duke. Propoſe the oath.
Jaff. By all the hopes
You have of peace and happineſs hereafter,
Swear.

All.

All. We all ſwear.

Jaff. And, as ye keep the oath,
May you and your poſterity be bleſs'd,
Or curs'd for ever.

All. Elſe be curs'd for ever.

Jaff. Then here's the liſt, and with't the full diſcloſe
Of all that threatens you.— [*Delivers a Paper.*
Now, fate, thou haſt caught me.

Duke. Give order, that all diligent ſearch be made,
To ſeize theſe men; their characters are public.
The paper intimates their rendezvous
To be at the houſe of the fam'd *Grecian* courtezan,
Call'd *Aquilina*; ſee the place ſecur'd.—
You, *Jaffier*, muſt with patience bear till morning
To be our priſoner.

Jaff. Sir, if poſſible,
Lead we where my own thoughts themſelves may loſe me;
Where I may doze out what I've left of life,
Forget myſelf, and this day's guilt and falſehood.—
Cruel remembrance, how ſhall I appeaſe thee.—
[*Exit guarded. Noiſe without.*

Offi. More traytors; room, room, make room there.

Duke. How's this, guards?
Where are our guards? Shut up the gates, the treaſon's.

Enter Officer.

Already at our doors.

Offi. My lords, more traytors
Seiz'd in the very act of conſulation;
Furniſh'd with arms and inſtruments of miſchief.
Bring in the priſoners.

Enter Pierre, Renault, Theodore, Eliot, Revellido, *and other Conſpirators, in fetters.*

Pier. You, my lords and fathers
(As you are pleas'd to call yourſelves) of *Venice.*
If you ſit here to guide the courſe of juſtice,

Why theſe diſgraceful chains upon the limbs
That have ſo often labour'd in your ſervice?
Are theſe the wreaths of triumph ye beſtow
On thoſe, that bring your conqueſts home, and honours?

Duke. Go on, you ſhall be heard, Sir.

Pier. Are theſe the trophies I've deſerv'd for fighting
Your battles with confederated powers?
When winds and ſeas conſpir'd to overthrow you;
And brought the fleets of *Spain* to your own harbours;
When you, great duke, ſhrunk trembling in your palace,
And ſaw your wife, the *Adriatick*, plough'd
Like a lewd whore, by bolder prows than yours;
Stepp'd not I forth, and taught your looſe *Venetians*
The taſk of honour, and the way of greatneſs?
Rais'd you from your capitulating fears
To ſtipulate the terms of ſu'd-for peace?
And this my recompence! If I'm a traytor,
Produce my charge; or ſhew the wretch that's baſe enough,
And brave enough, to tell me I'm a traytor.

Duke. Know you one *Jaffier*. [*All the Conſp. murmur.*

Pier. Yes, and know his virtue;
His juſtice, truth, his general worth, and ſufferings
From a hard father, taught me firſt to love him.

Duke. See him brought forth.

Enter Jaffier, *guarded.*

Pier. My friend too bound! Nay then
Our fate has conquer'd us, and we fall.—
Why droops the man whoſe welfare's ſo much mine.
They're but one thing?—Theſe reverend tyrants, *Jaffier*,
Call us traytors: Art thou one, my brother?

Jaff. To thee I am the falſeſt, verieſt ſlave,
That e'er betray'd a generous, truſting friend,
And gave up honour to be ſure of ruin:
All our fair hopes, which morning was to have crown'd,
Has

Has this curs'd tongue o'erthrown.
Pier. So, then all's over:
Venice has loſt her freedom, I my life,
No more;
Duke. Say; will you make confeſſion
Of your vile deeds, and truſt the ſenate's mercy?
Pier. Curs'd be your ſenate: Curs'd your conſtitution:
The curſe of growing factions and diviſions
Still vex your councils, ſhake your public ſafety,
And make the robes of government you wear
Hateful to you, as theſe baſe chains to me.
Duke. Pardon, or death!
Pier. Death! honourable death!
Ren. Death's the beſt thing we aſk, or you can give.
All Conſ. No ſhameful bonds, but honourable death.
Duke. Break up the council: Captain, guard your priſoners.
Jaffier, you're free, but theſe muſt wait for judgment.
[*Ex. all the Senators.*
Pier. Come, where's my dungeon? Lead me to my ſtraw:
It will not be the firſt time I have lodg'd hard
To do the ſenate ſervice.
Jaff. Hold one moment.
Pier. Who's he diſputes the judgment of the ſenate?
Preſumptuous rebel—on— [*Strikes* Jaffier.
Jaff. By heav'n, you ſtir not,
I muſt be heard, I muſt have leave to ſpeak:——
Thou haſt diſgrac'd me, *Pierre*, by a vile blow:
Had not a dagger done thee nobler juſtice?
But uſe me as thou wilt, thou can'ſt not wrong me;
But, as there dwells a godlike nature in thee,
Liſten with mildneſs to my ſupplications.
Pier. What whining monk art thou? what holy cheat,
That would'ſt incroach upon my credulous ears,
And cant'ſt thus vilely? hence! I know thee not.
Jaff. Not know me, *Pierre!*
Pier. No, know thee not; what art thou?

Jaff.

Jaff. *Jaffier*, thy friend, thy once lov'd, valu'd friend!
Tho' now deſerv'dly ſcorn'd, and uſ'd moſt hardly.
Pier. Thou *Jaffier*! thou my once lov'd, valu'd friend!
By heav'ns thou ly'ſt; the man ſo call'd, my friend,
Was generous, honeſt, faithful, juſt, and valiant,
Noble in mind, and in his perſon lovely,
Dear to my eyes, and tender to my heart.
But thou! a wretched, baſe, falſe, worthleſs coward,
Poor even in ſoul, and loathſome in thy aſpect:
All eyes muſt ſhun thee, and all hearts deteſt thee.
Prithee avoid, nor longer cling thus round me,
Like ſomething baneful, that my nature's chill'd at.
Jaff. I have not wrong'd thee, by theſe tears I have not?
Pier. Haſt thou not wrong'd me? dar'ſt thou call thyſelf
That once lov'd, valu'd friend of mine,
And ſwear thou haſt not wrong'd me? Whence theſe chains?
Whence the vile death, which I may meet this moment?
Whence this diſhonour, but from thee, thou falſe one?
Jaff. All's true; yet grant one thing, and I've done aſking.
Pier. What's that?
Jaff. To take thy life on ſuch conditions
The council have propos'd: Thou and thy friends
May yet live long, and to be better treated.
Pier. Life! aſk my life! confeſs! record myſelf
A villain! for the privilege to breathe,
And carry up and down this curſed city
A diſcontented and repining ſpirit,
Burdenſome to itſelf, a few years longer:
To loſe it, may be, at laſt, in a lewd quarrel
For ſome new friends, treacherous and falſe as thou art!———
No, this vile world and I have long been jangling,
And cannot part on better terms than now,

When

When only men like thee are fit to live in't.
Jaff. By all that's juſt———
Pier. Swear by ſome other powers,
For thou haſt broke that ſacred oath too lately.
Jaff. Then, by that hell I merit, I'll not leave thee.
Pier. Not leave me!
Jaff. No; thou ſhall not force me om thee;
Tread on me, buffet me, heap wrongs on wrongs
On my poor head; I'll bear it all with patience:
Lie at thy feet and kiſs 'em, tho' they ſpurn me,
Till wounded by my ſufferings thou relent,
And raiſe me to thy arms with dear forgiveneſs.
Pier. Art thou not———
Jaff. What?
Pier A traytor?
Jaff. Yes.
Pier. A villain?
Jaff. Granted.
Pier. A coward, a moſt ſcandalous coward,
Spiritleſs, void of honour, one who has ſold
Thy everlaſting fame for ſhameleſs life?
Jaff. All, all, and more, much more: My faults are numberleſs.
Pier. And would'ſt thou have me live on terms like thine?
Baſe as thou'rt falſe———
Jaff. No; 'tis to me that's granted:
The ſafety of thy life was all I aim'd at,
In recompence for faith and truſt ſo broken.
Pier. I ſcorn it more, becauſe preſerv'd by thee;
And, as when firſt my fooliſh heart took pity
On thy misfortunes, ſought thee in thy miſeries,
Reliev'd thy wants, and rais'd thee from thy ſtate
Of wretchedneſs, in which thy fate had plung'd thee,
To rank thee in my liſt of noble friends;
All I receiv'd, in ſurety for thy truth,
Were unregarded oaths, and this, this dagger,
Given with a worthleſs pledge thou ſince haſt ſtol'n.
So I reſtore it back to thee again;
Swearing by all thoſe powers which thou haſt violated,
Never,

Never, from this curs'd hour, to hold communion,
Friendſhip, or intereſt with thee, tho' our years
Were to exceed thoſe limited the world.
Take it—farewel—for now I owe thee nothing.
Jaff. Say thou wilt live then.
Pier. For my life, diſpoſe it
Juſt as thou wilt, becauſe 'tis what I'm tir'd with.
Jaff. Oh *Pierre!*
Pier. No more.
Jaff. My eyes won't loſe the ſight of thee,
But languiſh after thine, and ake with gazing.
Pier. Leave me—Nay, then thus, thus I throw thee from me;
And curſes, great as is thy falſhood, catch thee. [*Exit.*
Jaff. Amen.
He's gone, my father, friend, preſerver,
And here's the portion he has left me,
[*Holds the dagger up.*
This dagger: Well remember'd, with this dagger
I gave a ſolemn vow of dire importance;
Parted with this and *Belvidera* together.—
Have a care, mem'ry drive that thought no farther;
No, I'll eſteem it as a friend's laſt legacy,
Treaſure it up within this wretched boſom,
Where it may grow acquainted with my heart,
That, when they meet, they ſtart not from each other.
So, now for thinking:—A blow, call'd traytor, villain,
Coward, diſhonourable coward, fough!——
Down, buſy devil.

Enter Belvidera.

Bel. Whither ſhall I fly?
Where hide me and my miſeries together?——
Where's now the *Roman* conſtancy I boaſted?
Sunk into trembling fears and deſperation.
Not daring to look up to that dear face
Which us'd to ſmile, even on my faults, but, down
Bending theſe miſerable eyes to earth,
Muſt move in penance, and implore much mercy.

Jaff.

Jaff. Oh! *Belvidera!* I'm the wretched'ſt creature
E'er crawl'd on earth.
Bel. Alas! I know thy ſorrows are moſt mighty;
Thou'aſt loſt———
Jaff. Oh! I've loſt what can't be counted.
My friend too, *Belvidera*, that dear friend,
Who, next to thee, was all my health rejoic'd in,
Has us'd me like a ſlave, ſhamefully us'd me:—
'Twould break thy pitying heart to hear the ſtory.
Bel. What has he done?
Jaff. Before we parted,
Ere yet his guards had led him to his priſon,
As at his feet I kneel'd, and ſu'd for mercy;
He ſtruck me *Belvidera*;—by heav'n he ſtruck me!
Buffetted, call'd me traytor, villain, coward.——
Am I a coward? Am I a villain? Tell me:
Thou'rt the beſt judge, and made'ſt me, if I am ſo.—
Damnation! Coward?
Bel. Oh! forgive him, *Jaffier*;
And, if his ſufferings wound thy heart already,
What will they do to-morrow?
Jaff. Hah!
Bel. To-morrow,
When thou ſhalt ſee him ſtretch'd in all the agonies
Of a tormenting and a ſhameful death;
His bleeding bowels, and his broken limbs,
Inſulted o'er by a vile butchering villain.
What will thy heart do then! Oh! ſure 'twill ſtream
Like my eyes now.
Jaff. What means thy dreadful ſtory?
Death, and to-morrow? broken limbs and bowels.
Bel. The faithleſs ſenators, 'tis they've decreed it:
They ſay, according to our friends requeſt,
They ſhall have death, and no ignoble bondage:
Declare their promis'd mercy all as forfeited:
Falſe to their oaths, and deaf to interceſſion;
Warrants are paſs'd for public death to-morrow.
Jaff. Death! doom'd to die! condemn'd unheard!
unpleaded!
Bel. Nay, cruel'ſt racks and torments are preparing

To force confeſſion from their dying pangs.—
Oh! do not look ſo terribly upon me!
How your lips ſhake, and all your face diſorder'd!
What means my love?

Jaff. Leave me, I charge thee leave me—Strong temptations
Wake in my heart.

Bel. For what?

Jaff. No more, but leave me.

Bel. Why?

Jaff. Oh! by heav'n I love thee with that fondneſs,
I would not have thee ſtay a moment longer,
Near theſe curs'd hands: Are they not cold upon thee?
[*Pulls the dagger half out of his boſom, and puts it back again.*

Bel. No, everlaſting comfort's in thy arms.
To lean thus on thy breaſt is ſofter eaſe,
Than downy pillows deck'd with leaves of roſes.

Jaff. Alas! thou think'ſt not of the thorns 'tis fill'd with:
Fly, ere they gaul thee: There's a lurking ſerpent
Ready to leap, and ſting thee to the heart:
Art thou not terrify'd?

Bel. No.

Jaff. Call to mind (me.
What thou haſt done, and whither thou haſt brought

Bel. Hah! (miſchief?

Jaff. Where's my friend? my friend, thou ſmiling
Nay, ſhrink not, now 'tis too late; for dire revenge
Is up, and raging for my friend. He groans!
Hark how he groans! his ſcreams are in my ears!
See, ſee, they've fix'd him on the wheel,
And now they tear him—Murder! perjur'd ſenate!
Murder—oh!—hark thee, traitreſs, thou haſt done this;
Thanks to thy tears, and falſe perſuading love.
How her eyes ſpeak! O thou bewitching creature!
[*Fumbling for his dagger.*
Madneſs can't hurt thee: Come thou little trembler,
Creep even into my heart, and there lie ſafe;
'Tis thy own citadel——hah—yet ſtand off.

Heav'n

Heav'n muſt have juſtice.
I'll wink, and then 'tis done——
Bel. What means the lord
Of me, my life and love? What's in thy boſom,
Thou graſp'ſt at ſo?
[*Draws the dagger, offers to ſtab her.*
Ah! do not kill me, *Jaffier:*
Pity theſe panting breaſts, and trembling limbs,
And plunge me not into eternal darkneſs.
Jaff. Know, *Belvidera,* when we parted laſt,
I gave this dagger with thee, as in truſt
To be thy portion, if I e'er prov'd falſe.
On ſuch condition was my truth believ'd:
But now 'tis forfeited, and muſt be paid for.
[*Offers to ſtab her again.*
Bel. Oh! Mercy! [*Kneeling.*
Jaff. Nay, no ſtruggling.
Bel. Now then kill me.
[*Leaps upon his neck, and kiſſes him.*
While thus I cling about thy cruel neck,
Kiſs thy revengful lips, and die in joys
Greater than any I can gueſs hereafter.
Jaff. I am, I am a coward.——
'Tis but one blow! Yet, by immortal love,
I cannot longer bear a thought to harm thee.
[*He throws away the dagger, and embraces her.*
The ſeal of providence is ſure upon thee;
By all the power that's given thee o'er my ſoul,
By thy reſiſtleſs tears and conquering ſmiles,
Fly to thy cruel father, ſave my friend,
Or all our future quiet's loſt for ever.
Fall at his feet, cling round his reverend knees,
Melt his hard heart, and wake dead nature in him;
Nor, till thy prayers are granted, ſet him free,
But conquer him as thou haſt conquer'd me. [*Exit.*

ACT V. SCENE I.

A Room in Priuli's *Houſe.*

Enter Priuli *ſolus.*

Pri. WHY, cruel heav'n, have my unhappy days
Been lengthen'd to this ſad one? Oh! diſhonour
And deathleſs infamy is fall'n upon me.——
Was it my fault? Am I a traytor? No.
But then, my only child, my daughter wedded;
There my beſt blood runs foul, and a diſeaſe
Incurable has ſeiz'd upon my memory,
To make it rot and ſtink to after-ages.

Enter Belvidera *in a long mourning veil.*

Bel. He's there, my father, my inhuman father,
That for three years has left an only child
Expos'd to all the outrages of fate,
And cruel ruin!——Oh!——
Pri. What child of ſorrow
Art thou, that com'ſt wrapt up in weeds of ſadneſs,
And mov'ſt as if thy ſteps were towards a grave?
Bel. A wretch who from the very top of happineſs
Am fallen into the loweſt depths of miſery,
And want your pitying hand to raiſe me up again.
Pri. What would'ſt thou beg for?
Bel. Pity and forgiveneſs. [*Throws up her veil.*
By the kind and tender names of child and father,
Hear my complaints, and take me to your love.
Pri. My daughter! don't talk thus.

Bel.

Bel. Yes, I muſt; and you muſt hear too,
I have a huſband.
Pri. Damn him.
Bel. Oh! do not curſe him;
He would not ſpeak ſo hard a word towards you
On any terms, howe'er he deal with me.
Pri. Ha! what means my child?
Bel. Oh! my huſband, my dear huſband,
Carries a dagger in his once kind boſom,
To pierce the heart of your poor *Belvidera.*
Pri. Kill thee!
Bel. Yes, kill me. When he paſs'd his faith
And covenant againſt your ſtate and ſenate,
He gave me up as hoſtage for his truth:
With me a dagger, and a dire commiſſion,
Whene'er he fail'd to plunge it thro' this boſom.
I learnt the danger, choſe the hour of love
T'attempt his heart, and bring it back to honour.
Great love prevail'd, and bleſs'd me with ſucceſs;
He came, confeſs'd, betray'd his deareſt friends,
For promis'd mercy. Now they're doom'd to ſuffer.
Gall'd with remembrance of what then was ſworn,
If they are loſt, he vows t'appeaſe the gods
With this poor life, and make my blood th'atonement.
Pri. Heav'ns!
Bel. If I was ever then your care, now hear me;
Fly to the ſenate, ſave the promis'd lives
Of his dear friends, ere mine be made the ſacrifice.
Pri. Oh! my heart's comfort!
Bel. Will you not, my father?—
Weep not, but anſwer me.
Pri. By heav'n I will.
Not one of 'em but what ſhall be immortal.——
Canſt thou forgive me all my follies paſt,
I'll henceforth be indeed a father; never,
Never more thus expoſe, but cheriſh thee,
Dear as the vital warmth that feeds my life,
Dear as the eyes that weep in fondneſs o'er thee:
Peace to thy heart. Farewel.

Bel. Go, and remember
'Tis *Belvidera*'s life her father pleads for.
[*Exeunt ſeverally.*

SCENE II.

A Street.

Enter Jaffier.

Jaff. Final deſtruction ſeize on all the world.——
Bend down, ye heav'ns, and, ſhutting round this earth,
Cruſh the vile globe into its firſt confuſion;

Enter Belvidera.

Bel. My life—— [*Meeting him.*
Jaff. My plague—— [*Turning from her.*
Bel. Nay, then I ſee my ruin:
If I muſt die!
Jaff. Nay *Belvidera*, do not fear my cruelty,
Nor let the thoughts of death perplex thy fancy;
But anſwer me to what I ſhall demand,
With a firm temper and unſhaken ſpirit.
Bel. I will, when I've done weeping——
Jaff. Fie, no more on't——
How long is't ſince that miſerable day
We wedded firſt?
Bel. Oh! oh!
Jaff. Nay, keep in thy tears,
Leſt they unman me too.
Bel. Heav'n knows I cannot;
The words you utter ſound ſo very ſadly,
The ſtreams will follow——
Jaff. Come; I'll kiſs 'em dry then.
Bel. But was't a miſerable day?
Jaff. A curs'd one.
Bel. I thought it otherwiſe; and you've oft ſworn,
You bleſs'd it.

Jaff.

Jaff. 'Twas a raſh oath.
Bel. Then why am I not curs'd too?
Jaff. No, *Belvidera*, by th' eternal truth,
I doat with too much fondneſs.
Man ne'er was bleſs'd,
Since the firſt pair met, as I have been.
Bel. Then ſure you will not curſe me?
Jaff. No, I'll bleſs thee.
I came on purpoſe, *Belvidera*, to bleſs thee.
'Tis now, I think, three years, we've liv'd together.
Bel. And may no fatal minute ever part us,
Till reverend grown for age and love, we go
Down to one grave, as our laſt bed, together;
There ſleep in peace, till an eternal morning.
Jaff. Did I not ſay I came to bleſs thee?
Bel. Yes.
Jaff. Then hear me, bounteous heav'n;
Pour down your bleſſings on this beauteous head,
Where everlaſting ſweets are always ſpringing,
With a continual giving hand: Let peace,
Honour, and ſafety, always hover round her;
Feed her with plenty, let her eyes ne'er ſee
A ſight of ſorrow, nor her heart know mourning.
Crown all her days with joy, her nights with reſt,
Harmleſs as her own thoughts; and prop her virtue,
To bear the loſs of one that too much lov'd;
And comfort her with patience in our parting.
Bel. How, parting, parting!
Jaff. Yes, for ever parting!———
I have ſworn, *Belvidera*, by yon heav'n,
That beſt can tell how much I loſe, to leave thee.—
We part this hour for ever.
Bel. Oh! call back
Your cruel bleſſing; ſtay with me and curſe me!——
Oh! turn and hear me!
Jaff. Now hold, heart, or never.
Bel. By all the tender days we've liv'd together,
Pity my ſad condition; ſpeak, but ſpeak.
Jaff. Oh! oh!
Bel. By theſe arms that now cling round thy neck

By this dear kiſs, and by ten thouſand more,
By theſe poor ſtreaming eyes———
Jaff. Murder! unhold me:
By th' immortal deſtiny that doom'd me
[*Draws his dagger.*
To this curs'd minute, I'll not live one longer;
Reſolve to let me go, or ſee me fall——
Bel. Hold, Sir, be patient.
Jaff. Hark, the diſmal bell [*Paſſing-bell tolls.*
Tolls out for death! I muſt attend its call too;
For my poor friend, my dying *Pierre*, expects me:
He ſent a meſſage to require I'd ſee him
Before he dy'd, and take his laſt forgiveneſs.———
Farewel, for ever.
Bel. Leave thy dagger with me,
Bequeath me ſomething—Not one kiſs at parting;
Oh! my poor heart, when wilt thou break?
[*Going out, looks back at him.*
Jaff. Yet ſtay:
We have a child, as yet a tender infant;
Be a kind mother to him when I'm gone,
Breed him in virtue, and the paths of honour;
But never let him know his father's ſtory.
Now—nearer yet— [*Approaching each other.*
Oh! that my arms were riveted
Thus round thee ever! But my friend! my oath!
This, and no more. [*Kiſſes her.*
Bel. Another ſure, another,
For that little poor one you've ta'en ſuch care of,
I'll give't him truly.
Jaff. So now farewel.
Bel. For ever?
Jaff. Heav'n knows, for ever; all good angels guard thee. [*Exit.*
Bel. All ill ones ſure had charge of me this moment.
Oh! give me daggers, fire or water:
How I could bleed, how burn, how drown, the waves
Huzzing and foaming round my ſinking head,
Till I deſcended to the peaceful bottom!
Oh! there's all quiet, here all rage and fury:

The

The air's too thin, and pierces my weak brain;
I long for thick ſubſtantial ſleep: Hell! hell!
Burſt from the center, rage and roar aloud,
If thou art half ſo hot, ſo mad as I am. [*Exit.*

SCENE *opening diſcovers a ſcaffold, and a wheel prepared for the execution of* Pierre; *then enter Officers,* Pierre *and guards, a Friar, Executioner, and a great rabble.* [*Bell tolls.*

Pier. My friend not yet come?

Enter Jaffier.

Jaff. Hold, eyes, be dry;
Heart ſtrengthen me, to bear
This hideous ſight, and humble me, to take
The laſt forgiveneſs of a dying friend,
Betray'd by my vile falſhood to his ruin.
Oh! *Pierre!*

Pier. Yet nearer.

Jaff. Crawling on my knees,
And proſtrate on the earth, let me approach thee:
How ſhall I look up to thy injur'd face.

Pier. Dear to my arms, tho' thou'ſt undone my fame,
I can't forget to love thee: Prithee, *Jaffier,*
Forgive that filthy blow my paſſion dealt thee;
I am now preparing for the land of peace,
And fain would have the charitable wiſhes
Of all good men, like thee, to bleſs my journey.

Jaff. Good! I am the vileſt creature, worſe than e'er
Suffer'd the ſhameful fate thou'rt going to taſte of.
Why was I ſent for, to be us'd thus kindly?

Offi. The time grows ſhort, your friends are dead already.

Jaff. Dead! (too!

Pier. Yes, dead, *Jaffier*; they've all dy'd like men
Worthy their character.

Jaff. And what muſt I do?

Pier. Oh! *Jaffier!*

Jaff. Speak aloud thy burthen'd ſoul, And

And tell thy troubles to thy tortur'd friend.

Pier. Friend! Could'ſt thou yet be a friend, a generous friend,
I might hope comfort from thy noble ſorrows.—
Heav'n knows I want a friend.

Jaff. And I a kind one.
That would not thus ſcorn my repenting virtue,
Or think, when he's to die, my thoughts are idle.

Pier. No! live, I charge thee, *Jaffier*.

Jaff. Yes, I will live:
But it ſhall be to ſee thy fall reveng'd
At ſuch a rate as *Venice* long ſhall groan for.

Pier. Wilt thou?

Jaff. I will, by heav'n.

Pier. Then ſtill thou'rt noble,
And I forgive thee, Oh!—yet—ſhall I truſt

Jaff. No? I've been falſe already.

Pier. Do'ſt thou love me?

Jaff. Rip up my heart, and ſatisfy thy doubtings.

Pier. Curſe on this weakneſs [*He weeps.*

Jaff. Tears! amazement! tears!
I never ſaw thee melted thus before;
And know there's ſomething labouring in thy boſom
That muſt have vent: Tho' I'm a villain, tell me.

Pier. See'ſt thou that engine? [*Pointing to the wheel.*

Jaff. Why?

Pier. Is't fit a ſoldier, who has liv'd with honour,
Fought nations quarrels, and been crown'd with conqueſt,
Be expos'd a common carcaſe on a wheel?

Jaff. Hah!

Pier. Speak: Is't fitting?

Jaff. Fitting!

Pier. Yes, is't fitting?

Jaff. What's to be done?

Pier, I'd have thee undertake
Something that's noble to preſerve my memory
From the diſgrace that's ready to attaint it.

Offi. The day grows late, Sir.

Pier. I'll make haſte.—Oh! *Jaffier*!

Tho

Tho' thou'ſt betray'd me, do me ſome way juſtice.
Jaff. No more of that: Thy wiſhes ſhall be ſatisfy'd;
I have a wife, and ſhe ſhall bleed: My child too
Yield up his little throat, and all
T' appeaſe thee———
[*Going away,* Pierre *holds him.*
Pier. No—this—no more. [*He whiſpers* Jaffier.
Jaff. Hah! Is't then ſo?
Pier. Moſt certainly.
Jaff. I'll do't.
Pier. Remember.
Offi. Sir.
Pier. Come, now I'm ready.
[*He and* Jaffier *aſcend the ſcaffold.*
Captain, you ſhould be a gentleman of honour;
Keep off the rabble, that I may have room
To entertain my fate, and die with decency.
[*Executioner prepares to bind him.*
You'll think on't? [*to* Jaffier.
Jaff. 'Twon't grow ſtale before to-morrow.
Pier. Now, *Jaffier!* now I'm going. Now—
[*Executioner having bound him.*
Jaff. Have at thee,
Thou honeſt heart, then—here— [*Stabs him.*
And this is well too. [*Then ſtabs himſelf.*
Pier. Now thou haſt indeed been faithful.
This was done nobly—We have deceiv'd the ſenate.
Jaff. Bravely.
Pier. Ha, ha, ha—oh! oh! [*Dies.*
Jaff. Now, ye curs'd rulers,
Thus of the blood y'ave ſhed I make libation,
And ſprinkle it mingling: May it reſt upon you,
And all your race.—
Oh! poor *Belvidera!*—
Sir, I have a wife, bear this in ſafety to her,
A token that with my dying breath I bleſs'd her,
And the dear little infant behind me.
I'm ſick—I'm quiet. [Jaffier *dies.*
Offi. Bear this news to the ſenate,
And guard their bodies till there's farther orders:
[*Scene ſhuts upon them.*

Soft

Soft Muſick. *Enter* Belvidera *diſtracted, led by two of her Women,* Priuli, *and Servants.*

Pri. Strengthen her heart with patience, pitying heav'n.

Bel. Come, come, come, come, come, nay, come to bed.
Prithee, my love.—The winds, hark how they whiſtle;
And the rain beats: Oh! how the weather ſhrinks me!
You are angry now, who cares? Piſh, no indeed.
Chuſe then, I ſay you ſhall not go, you ſhall not.
Whip your ill-nature; get you gone then; oh!
Are you return'd? See, father, here he's come again,
Am I to blame to love him? O thou dear one.
Why do you fly me? Are you angry ſtill then?
Jaffier, where art thou? Father, why do you do thus?
Stand off, don't hide him from me. He's there ſomewhere.
Stand off, I ſay: What gone? Remember't, tyrant:
I may revenge myſelf for this trick, one day,
I'll do't——I'll do't.

Enter Officer.

Pri. News, what news: [Officer *whiſpers* Priuli.

Offi. Moſt ſad, Sir;
Jaffier, upon the ſcaffold, to prevent
A ſhameful death, ſtabb'd *Pierre*, and next himſelf:
Both fell together.

Pri. Daughter.

Bel. Ha! look there!
My huſband bloody and his friend too! Murder!
Who has done this? Speak to me, thou ſad viſion!
On theſe poor trimbling knees I beg it: Vaniſh'd—
Here they went down: Oh! I'll dig, dig the den up.
You ſhan't delude me thus. Hoa, *Jaffier*, *Jaffier*,
Peep up, and give me but a look. I have him!
I've got him, father:
My love! my dear! my bleſſing! help me! help me!

They

They have hold on me, and drag me to the bottom.
Nay—now they pull ſo hard—farewel— [*She dies.*

Pri. O! guard me from the ſight on't:
Lead me into ſome place that's fit for mourning;
Where the free air, light, and the chearful ſun
May never enter: Hang it round with black;
Set up one taper, that may light a day,
As long as I've to live: And there all leave me;
Sparing no tears, when you this tale relate,
But bid all cruel fathers dread my fate.

[*Exeunt Omnes.*

FINIS.

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MAY